

THE  
HISTORY OF  
A  
SCHOOLMASTER,  
OR THE  
RENOWNED PEDAGOGUE,  
OF  
NIBBIANO.

Shewing how that rare Genius reached the summit of the Arts and Sciences without being instituted in their elements when young, gave a new edition of Statius with notes; taught 400 Boys to read whipped them well—many of whom were youths of happy memory, and on what soever soil their lot shall cast them, they will remember their Preceptor: in short he enlightened a new race of men, and all this Blaze of Glory was owing to nothing more or less than being a Cuckold.

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HISTORY OF THE  
RENOWNED PEDAGOGUE  
OF  
NIBBIANO.

SIR George and Sir Henry Osmond, two English Gentlemen, whose curiosity had led them to visit the Glaciers of Savoy; returning thro' the valley of Chamouni, Sir George was making this observation, "that to reach the summit of any art or science, without being instituted in its elements when young, is an instance of rare genius indeed."

"Behold in me that rare genius," answers a thin, spare gentleman, who overtook us at that instant.

"You are foreigners, gentlemen," continues he; "*ultra montani*, I know it by your bad Italian; but though you lived *apud ultimam Tkulé*, my fame must have reached your ears. I am the renowned pedagogue of Nibbiano."

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The renowned pedagogue of Nibbiano seeing us deprived of the faculty of speech, went on thus. "Once, I was a peasant of Piedmont, a lump of unformed clay. Now, I have given a new edition of Statius *cum notis variorum*, all wrote by myself. I have taught four hundred boys to read—or seem to read. I have whipped them well. Many were youths of happy memory. On whatsoever soil their lot shall cast them, they will remember their preceptor. And all this blaze of glory, I owe to nothing more or less than being a cuckold."

"The Devil! says Sir George. The incident indeed is common enough, but to grow immortal by it, is rare felicity. At the inn before you, we design this evening to make ourselves as happy as men unknown to Fame can expect to be. Condescend learned Sir, to favour us with your society. Instruct us in the  
causes



causes and consequences of this very common and extraordinary event. We also have happy memories, and will remember our Preceptor."

"Enough," replies the Schoolmaster; "a desire of instruction is *mentis ingenue Signum*; I devote myself this evening to your service."

The inn was the best in the vallies of Chamouni; for it had a large parlour furnished with two beaufets, containing the glass and china ware, and all the elegant utensils of a country inn. It is true, this occasioned a perpetual commotion) I wish the world was naturalized) betwixt the beaufets and the kitchen, and inconvenience for which the landlady consoled herself, because she was able by it to keep her guests awake; and her guests, because it was irremediable.

Arranging ourselves then in the circumference of a circle of which the fire  
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was the centre, with two bottles of unimported wine before us, see us prepared to profit by the wisdom of our whimsical preceptor.

“Thirty years since,” says he, “I was a peasant of Piedmont, and rented a moderate farm under the fathers of the convent of Polimo, I married a pretty creature, with eyes as black as ebony, and sparkling like diamonds. Of wit, she had enough; of devotion, something to spare.

“Since I became a man of science I have been diligent in the enquiry whether an antient or a modern Roman had the power to devote most time to the outside of religion; and I find the ancient might sacrifice, and the modern Mass away a dozen hours per diem in all holiness. But these essential duties, as the Parsons call them, are only for the rich, Poor folk must be the devils property for want of time. My wife however did

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as well as she could; her rosary of fifteen paternoster, and ten times fifteen ave maria beads, performed its destined business, even whilst the cows were milking; and before all things, she preferred the sacred duty of confession.

“ My house happened to be within an evening’s walk of the convent, and one or other of the good fathers would often call in, and bestow upon me a few pious exhortations. Father Paul in particular, my wife’s confessor, overflowed in zeal and kindness; and it was a grievous mortification to me, that one profane business or other, prevented my reaping the full harvest of his holy admonitions.

“ One morn, one fatal morn ! sad presage of future misfortunes I broke my plough. Returning to the house, I asked my little girl, who began to lisp, where was her mother ?”

“ Tontessing Daddy, wid fader Paul.”

“ Confessing.”

"Confessing," says I, "is a good work and ought to be secret, I'll not interrupt them. And where are they, Annetti?"

"In Mammy's chamber."

"In Mammy's chamber! Humph! A very foolish fit of curiosity seized me all of a sudden, to know what kind of sins my pious wife could possibly have upon her hands. I crept softly into the next chamber; the partition wall was an old wainscoat, terribly out of repair, through one of the chinks I perceived the holy father's cowl and mantle lying upon a chair. The hour of penance had succeeded that of confession, and the good father Paul was actually chastizing his penitent with the sweat of his own brow. But as it was a kind of penance which foolish husbands are apt to think they have the sole right of inflicting, this invasion of property gave me the heart-burn. So great however was my reverence for holy men, that I did

did not dare to admit the least thought of vengeance. On the contrary, I sneaked down into the stable, where I amused myself with scratching my pate and gnawing my thumbs, till I saw father Paul depart. Then taking a pliant plant, I slipped unobserved into the confessional room, where I found the bed as composed as if it had never sinned. I called up my wife. Come hither my pretty Annetti, says I, and tell me what father Paul and you have been about so long in this room?"

"I have been at confession."

"And what did you confess, Annetti?"

"Law now, Benedict, as if you did not know what a sin it is to tell."

"Well, I hope you got absolution, Annetti?"

"Yes, sure."

"Then you are fit for heaven whither I design to send you as soon as possible, (taking out a clasp knife.) Annetti plumpt



plumpt upon her knees. It was impossible to kill her in that attitude; so I only beat her till she fainted away.

"At that time of day, gentlemen, my ideas of cucko'dom were quite unphilosophic; passion had the ascendant. An experience of thirty years has taught me to consider it as a mere peccadillo; and if a woman has no other fault than making her husband a cuckold, she is a good woman.

"I left my wife in the chamber, and stalked heroically into an adjoining field. I wanted to reason, but my blood was too warm; I could therefore only agitate the question, whether I should stay and bear my infamy, or run away and leave it behind. It was a terrible conflict, and might have lasted to this hour for ought I know, if Annetti herself had not discovered it. I saw her steal out of the house, and take the road to the convent like a lapwing. Oh ho,  
says

says I, if thou art going to raise that hornet's nest about my ears, I must carry them away from the Euz. So slipping back into the house I put on my best apparel, broke open the money drawer, robbed myself, and ran away with the booty; nor did I give myself a day's repose till, like another Hannibal, I had passed the Po.

“ By this time, my blood stood at temperate; consequently I could better see the road before me. From a peasant of Piedmont I had advanced myself to the dignity of a citizen of the world, and I had seven and twenty pistoles in my purse, to maintain it.

“ Of all the variety of habits worn by the mind of man, I had a peculiar aversion to black; I never dressed mine in it for an hour, except when my belly was empty; and whilst my pistoles lasted it was as seldom so, as Apicius himself could have wished. During  
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this happy period, I saw, like Ulysses, many men and many manners; but when my unhappy purse had breathed its last, I saw fewer of both than I liked. I was then obliged to bid adieu to splendid cities, and traverse the plains from plough to plough. During this peregrination which lasted near ten years, it must be owned, *Fames et macies* made themselves too familiar with my person, and at length fairly drove me to the shelter of a brick-kiln, at the little town of Nibbiano, where I hired myself for the summer.

“ My humble lodging happened to be next door to a school of some reputation, where forty or fifty boys were taught to read and write, and were grounded in the rudiments of the latin tongue. Besides this, the master gave two hours every evening to the instruction of young people who were obliged to labour in the day. There

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was a time when I could have writ, read, and *docuer docueris'd* well enough for a peasant; but it was all lost, and the whim seized me of recovering it. See me then at school at the age of thirty-five, hunting through grammars and dictionaries, and what is more extraordinary, ardent in the chace. The master was an old man, who living a bachelor to his grand climacteric, had saved money, and a year before indulged himself with a young wife. She and the school together bore too hard upon him, and as he had taken a sort of liking to me, he offered upon the approach of winter my board for my assistance. I accepted the offer and was received into the house.

“I was now, as it were, at the feet of Gamahel, and eat science at every meal. Undoubtedly we were a learned family, for Mrs. Padilli herself was imbued *cum bonis, litteris*, chiefly extracted from an excellent

excellent folio called the lives of the saints. The good creature was never without miracles for our entertainment, one more exalted than another. That of St. Anthony, if I do not mistake the saint, reached the true pinnacle of the sublime. The head of this good man, the blood thirsty heathens struck off at a single blow. Escaped from the murderous axe, it rolled itself seventy-four yards up a hill. St. Anthony got up from the block, hobbled after his poor head as fast as he could, took it up, kissed it, and putting it under his arm, walked home to his own house, several leagues off; and there buried his poor head and himself, reading the service of the dead all the while, to the astonishment and edification of a crowded audience.

“ But a woman may be a good wife, even though she does believe in miracles and I think Italy never produced a better.



er. She honoured and obeyed her husband wonderfully, and the old man confessed himself happier in the autumn, than he had been in the spring and summer of his life. "I have," says he, "but two things to plague me; Rheumatism, and the want of a boy to make a Pythagoras of."

"Mr. Arnaud," says the good Mrs. Padilli one day in the second year of my abode with them, "what a pity it is my master did not marry before he was past getting children?"

"Great pity, Mrs. Padilli."

"Not to have an heir to his means; so much as he longs for one too."

"A thousand pities indeed, Mrs. Padilli."

"To be sure its a great sin, and a great shame, for a married woman, to let another man touch her. I wonder how a woman can look up after. Sure I never could."

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“ This was a case however in which Mrs Padilli happened to be mistaken, for neither her spotless virtue, nor my exalted philosophy, could get the victory over Satan and our senses, yet the good woman in a little time, looked up very well after it.

“ In this state of sin I lived about three years, when it pleased heaven, by taking old Padilli to itself, to call me back again to righteousness ; for it became the widow's interest, and for ought I know, her inclination, to offer me her beautiful self in marriage. I considered the matter in all its lights, celestial and terrestrial. The cannon laws, and the civil laws equally prohibited two wives at a time ; but unless Canonists and Lawyers were conjurors I thought I had little to fear. In short I settled the matter with my conscience, and wedded the widow in six months

“ Fourteen years I lived with her,  
enjoying

enjoying all the solid comforts of matrimony, except children. All this time I increased my learning, my reputation, my school, and my money. Whether the holy ghost proceeded from the father only, or from the father and the son; whether my wife was alive, or my new one made me a cuckold, were mysteries, into which I never cared to enquire, and I question but I was altogether as happy in ignorance, as a revelation of these points would have made me. At length, it pleased Atropos to cut the thread of my Nibbiano spouse's life. I bore it with the fortitude of a philosopher. But I have since found in some particulars, my tranquility is vulnerable. I took into my house a decent hand-maid who got herself with child without my leave; under whose administration indeed my wine never went sour by too long keeping;

ing ; but my money, now my greatest comfort in life, marched speedily off for extraordinaries. History and Experience have both taught me, that troops serving for pay, are not to be relied on ; my last and present mercenary, is an old woman whom I took upon character ; that of being the stingiest old devil in Italy. It is true I have saved more money during her reign, but my house stinks of dirt, and all things animate or inanimate within it.

“ Reflecting upon these and other crosses, and above all upon the nature of woman, I concluded it was in vain to expect a filken purse out of a sow's ear, and that it was the wisest way to take the world, women and all, as we found it ; for after all, if we have rats, fleas, and monks to plague mankind, we have farmers and schoolmasters for its nourishment and information.

“ My dear Annetti, says I, had but  
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one fault ; all I have to fear is, that old Time should have physicked her out of it, and substituted half a dozen in its room. Let us try, but let us go warily about it. So I took the opportunity of our months vacation, mounted my mule, and without fear of discovery, repaired to the scene of my youthful joys and sorrows. Every thing was changed. The convent razed to the ground. My house turned into the country seat of a Piedmontese nobleman, and the name of Benedict Arnaud unknown. My wife had relations at St. Remi——”

“ And so have you, Benedict,” says the landlady of the house, rushing into the room.

Benedict crossed himself.

“ Old Time, I suppose,” says she, “ has physicked me out of your memory, Benedict ; but I knew you the moment you entered the house. But I have learnt



learnt discretion as well as yourself, and better too perhaps; for though you have got learning, you don't seem to have added much to your stock of wisdom, or else you would not have been so forward to expose your insignificance to strangers."

This was a palpable hit. Poor Benedict shrugged up his shoulders, looked round upon us, and spoke not a word.

"I have heard your story, Benedict," continues the good woman, "and to-morrow you shall hear mine, and God knows which of us is most to blame. I am sure I loved you as well as my own eyes, for all what I did with Father Paul, which was only for my soul's sake, and out of no ill will to you."

"Since that is the case, dear Annetti," says the Preceptor, "let us forget and forgive. I will carry thee to Nibbiano ——and——"

"No,

"No, there goes two words to that bargain, Benedict; I have been married as well as you, and am mistress of this inn, and thank God well to pass. And your daughter is well married at St. Remi, and has made you a grandfather, and here I will live and die, Benedict. If you will do the same, well and good, if not, there's no help for it. We are past our childish days I hope. Gentlemen shall I lend in supper?"

"If you please, Ma'am."

"*Abi in malam rem, Pessime,*" says the schoolmaster, grinning at her as she left the room. "This smells confoundedly of my return to Nibbiano alone. Your opinion, Messieurs?"

"Your lady," says Sir George, "has still fine black eyes; and they seem to speak a language perfectly intelligible. If, for the last twenty years of your life, you had practised passive obedience, on board a Turkish galley, it would have been

been a fine preparation ; but you have unfortunately been in the habit of exercising unlimited authority as well as she. If you can divest yourself of royalty indeed, or use it only over such fellows as Julius Cæsar, or Alexander the great."——

"I, I," says the schoolmaster, "I submit to a female reign ! I who have given a new edition of Statius ! I who have enlightened a new race of men !

"Even so, Benedict, for all your big words," says the Landlady, bringing in the first dish. "Nobody shall command here, but myself. If you choose to enjoy yourself in ease, smoke your pipe, and be quiet——So——"

"*Otium cum dignitate, mi didasculæ,*" says Sir Ambrose, "embrace it by all means.

"*Lites, cum dedecore, opinor :*" returns the schoolmaster. "No——I will return to Nibbiano ; I will live and die a master.

master. Or stay——and assert my rights. Am I not your husband?"

"No, indeed, you are not, Benedict, without my leave; and you'll never get it by swelling yourself with pride and vanity, and speaking your words like a tragedy man. Its law here, when a man leaves his wife, and does not let her know he is alive for seven years, she may marry again if she will. I stayed eleven years, Benedict, and many a bitter bit of black bread have I eat with my tears. I got to be servant here, and the master took a liking to me, and offered to marry me. What could I do better? From the day of our marriage he never interfered with me one hour in the management of his house; but eat, and drank, and smoked his pipe, and died in peace. And if you have a mind to do the same, Benedict, do it and welcome."

The worthy schoolmaster soon perceived,

received, that though a master of languages, he was much his wife's inferior in her mother tongue, and for the present he gave up the point in dispute; contenting us, he would stay one week, just to make a catalogue of all his wife's good qualities, and then return to Nibbiano, to ponder his future destiny and leisure.

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